



# Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Indiana District Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Local School Board Presidents, and Local Teachers' Association Leaders

**FROM:** Tony Bennett, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** *FAST FORWARD* — Indiana's Plan for Race to the Top (RttT)

**DATE:** Thursday, December 17, 2009

*It's time to expect more from our students. It's time to start rewarding good teachers, stop making excuses for bad ones. It's time to demand results from government at every level. It's time to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to out-compete any worker, anywhere in the world.*

~President Obama on Race to the Top~

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) will submit Indiana's Race to the Top (RttT) application by January 19, 2010. This is an unprecedented opportunity to increase the speed and scope of reforms that will benefit every Hoosier student. Few states are as well-positioned as Indiana to receive this historic funding, and participating LEAs could receive the financial and strategic support necessary to implement key education reforms. This opportunity is all the more significant given the dire economic forecasts and may represent the only opportunity for additional education funding in Indiana for the foreseeable future.

IDOE encourages LEAs to voluntarily participate in Indiana's RttT reform plan (Fast Forward) by signing a Partnership Agreement. Signing the agreement at this time ensures a participating LEA's inclusion in the state's RttT application. Following notice of a RttT award, participating LEAs will work with IDOE to complete related work plans. Failure to complete the necessary work plan and related implementation agreement, as further described in the partnership agreement, will make the LEA ineligible for participation in the RttT plan and for the receipt of related funds. Any LEA that does not return the partnership agreement cannot later decide to participate.

To be successful, Indiana's RttT application must articulate and demonstrate our commitment to advancing reforms in four clearly specified areas, all of which mirror IDOE's vision for state education reform:

- Adopting internationally-benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- Building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices;
- Recruiting, developing, retaining and rewarding effective teachers and principals; and
- Turning around struggling schools.

IDOE has created this Executive Summary to provide a thorough but manageable look at Indiana's reform plan. The document reviews the four tenets of reform and outlines the main components of Fast Forward. Because RttT is a national competition, releasing our full application at this time would put our state at a competitive

disadvantage. Additionally, due to the length and detail required in the application, our entire plan is not complete. This overview is designed to familiarize key stakeholders with the salient details of Fast Forward and to provide them with the information necessary to determine their support and commitment to the state's plan before signing a partnership agreement.

Participating LEAs will agree to implement a number of bold reforms reflecting each key area described above. Because this reform category will be scored more heavily than any other, effective teachers and school leaders will be a major focus of Fast Forward. Indiana's plan will include components addressing teacher pay and promotion, meaningful evaluation and targeted professional development. Student growth and academic achievement are central to all aspects of our state's application.

IDOE will work cooperatively with stakeholders from participating LEAs to develop an appropriate implementation plan that considers the unique circumstances in each district and best meets students' needs.

Funding awarded through RttT will be distributed to participating LEAs according to U.S. Department of Education (ED) guidelines. Funding amounts for participating LEAs will be determined by the size of the award to IDOE and the level of participation by LEAs. Half of any funds awarded to Indiana will be distributed to participating LEAs based on their relative shares of Title I. Use of these dollars is not restricted to Title I activities but must be in accordance with Fast Forward. Remaining RttT funds are designated for statewide reform initiatives. To create greater equity among all LEAs, IDOE will consider Title I student population differences when distributing the state-designated funds to participating LEAs. In all cases, awarded funds must support identified education reform efforts that are outlined in Fast Forward.

The aggressive RttT timeline requires us to work quickly to submit Indiana's application within the 60-day response period provided by ED. For an LEA to have an opportunity to receive an allocation of funds under Indiana's RttT plan, a local superintendent must join with the local school board president and local teachers' association leader to sign the attached partnership agreement. This agreement outlines the mutual responsibilities of the state and the LEA for planning and implementing provisions of Fast Forward.

**Participating LEAs must return their agreements to IDOE no later than 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 12. No additional agreements will be accepted after this time. Signed agreements may be submitted via email to [fastforward@doe.in.gov](mailto:fastforward@doe.in.gov) or faxed to 317-232-0744. IDOE will email a confirmation message to an email address provided by the LEA within 72 hours of receipt of the LEA's signed agreement. If you do not receive this confirmation, please contact us at [fastforward@doe.in.gov](mailto:fastforward@doe.in.gov).**

If Indiana receives an award under RttT, each participating LEA will work with IDOE to establish a detailed work plan. Work plans must be consistent with Fast Forward and must be approved by the state. **If the state and a participating LEA are unable to agree to a final work plan, the partnership agreement becomes invalid, and the LEA will not be allowed to participate in the implementation of Fast Forward.**

Please review the following materials carefully. We expect stakeholders to have additional questions, and I will be traveling with key IDOE staff members to hold informational meetings across the state in the coming weeks. IDOE will conduct meetings in the following locations:

- December 22 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at the Central Indiana Education Service Center (6321 La Pas Trail in Indianapolis)
- December 28 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. in Madison
- December 28 from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. at Jasper High School's Auditorium (1600 St. Charles St. in Jasper)
- December 29 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at Greencastle Senior High School's McNally Center Auditorium (910 E. Washington St. in Greencastle)

- December 30 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at West Lafayette Jr./Sr. High School's Auditorium (1105 N. Grant St. in West Lafayette)
- December 30 from Noon to 1:30 p.m. (CST) in either Merrillville or Valparaiso
- January 4 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at Wayne High School (9100 Winchester Rd. in Fort Wayne)
- January 4 from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. on the Notre Dame campus in South Bend
- January 5 from 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. at Greenfield-Central High School's Auditorium (810 N. Broadway St. in Greenfield)

IDOE will post final meeting details on our website as soon as possible. As always, you may contact my office with further questions or concerns at [fastforward@doe.in.gov](mailto:fastforward@doe.in.gov).

## **Executive Summary of Indiana's Fast Forward Plan**

### **Standards and Assessments:**

Through RttT, ED asks states to advance reforms by adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. As part of the application, ED requires states to demonstrate commitment to adopting a common set of high-quality standards. States can demonstrate this commitment by highlighting participation in a consortium of a significant number of states working toward developing and adopting a common set of K-12 standards. These standards are supported by evidence indicating they are internationally benchmarked and build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation. Further, ED requires states to commit to adopting these standards by August 2, 2010 (or at a minimum, by a later date in 2010 specified by the state) and implementing the standards thereafter in a well-planned way.

To that end, Indiana joined the Common Core State Standards Initiative, a joint effort led by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with Achieve, ACT and the College Board. By joining this consortium, governors and state commissioners of education from across the country have demonstrated their commitment to a state-led process to develop a common core of state standards in English/language arts and mathematics for grades K-12. To date, 51 states and territories have joined this consortium.

The draft K-12 standards are expected to be released by early 2010. An expert validation committee will provide an independent review of the common core state standards as well as the grade-by-grade standards. States and national organizations will have the opportunity to review and provide evidence-based feedback on the draft documents throughout the process. Public feedback on the K-12 standards will be captured at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org). IDOE will work with the Indiana Education Roundtable and the State Board of Education to adopt the new standards in 2010.

RttT also requires states to highlight participation in a consortium of a significant number of states that is working toward developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments aligned with the common set of K-12 standards. As a natural progression of the Common Core State Standards Initiative's work, some states will voluntarily come together to develop new, innovative, common assessments as part of RttT. Indiana is taking a leading role in a consortium of states working toward developing and implementing common, high-quality assessments aligned with common standards. This common assessment system will include multiple forms of assessment so student performance will be determined by what each student knows and can do.

Finally, ED requires states to collaborate with participating LEAs to develop a high-quality plan for supporting a statewide transition to and implementation of internationally-benchmarked K-12 standards that build toward college and career readiness by the time of high school graduation and high-quality assessments tied to these standards. Where appropriate, Indiana will invite consortium, LEA, teacher and teachers' association participation in the rollout effort. Fast Forward may include, but will not be limited to, the following:

- Collaborative effort between IDOE, Indiana teachers and college/university partners to conduct a gap analysis to determine the difference between current Indiana standards and the new common standards;
- Realignment of the ISTEP+ blueprint to the common standards and improvement of Indiana's diagnostic assessments so they are predictive of common core;
- Development of a research-based scope and sequence, for each subject area and grade level, in alignment with the common standards and ISTEP+;
- Development of curriculum maps in alignment with scope and sequence, new standards and ISTEP+;
- Development and delivery of comprehensive and ongoing professional development via convenient technological means in order to provide optimal support to teachers and administrators;
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development to ensure Indiana's teachers are receiving the information and support they need to close the achievement gap and be successful in the classroom;
- Development of all appropriate materials around the common standards, including written guides (distributed digitally) to help teachers better understand the new standards and what each standard means in terms of actual practice at particular grade levels; and
- Monitoring of the progress of implementation in order to provide quality feedback and support to LEAs and teachers throughout the implementation process.

#### **Data Systems to Support Instruction:**

Indiana must fulfill one reform condition in the area of data systems. We must demonstrate that the state has a complete statewide longitudinal data system, according to the twelve elements laid out in the America COMPETES Act (the elements are based on the Data Quality Campaign elements). Each element, along with its implementation status, is identified below:

- 1) A unique statewide identifier: 100% complete.
- 2) Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation: 100% complete.
- 3) Student-level information about the points at which students exit, transfer in/out, or complete P-16 education programs: 100% complete.

- 4) Capacity to communicate with higher education data systems: 100% capacity is present; data sharing is approximately 50% complete.
- 5) A data audit system assessing data quality, validity and reliability: 100% complete.
- 6) Yearly test records of individual students: 100% complete
- 7) Information on students not tested by grade and subject: 100% complete.
- 8) A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students: 50% complete. IDOE has a teacher identifier system (School Personnel Number, SPN) and will collect course completion data tied to teachers (using the SPN) beginning at the end of the 2009-2010 school year. The SPN also allows IDOE to tie each teacher to the following information: institution at which they received their education; licensure and certification; demographic variables such as race/ethnicity, age, and gender; and staff position information such as school assignment, subjects and grade levels taught, and years of experience.
- 9) Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned: 0% complete. In order to complete this element, Indiana has applied for a federal State Longitudinal Data Systems (SLDS) grant. This grant would provide the resources the state needs to complete our statewide e-transcript initiative.
- 10) Student-level college readiness test scores: 100% complete.
- 11) Information regarding the extent to which students transition successfully from secondary schools to post-secondary education, including whether students enroll in remedial coursework: 50% complete. As noted in element four, IDOE is piloting matching with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) to track K-12 students into college. At present, IDOE has done that matching with a small subset of students. Projects proposed in the state's recent SLDS grant are designed to move the IDOE-CHE matching project forward to be able to answer questions about student success in post-secondary education.
- 12) Other information determined necessary to address alignment and adequate preparation for success in post-secondary education: 50% complete. IDOE is an agency participant in the Indiana Workforce and Education Data System (IWIS) project, which is designed as a repository for matched P-20 data, allowing for reports and other tools to answer key policy questions. IWIS was initially created by the state's Department of Workforce Development (DWD) to house its data and transitioned to work with CHE to match higher education data. The data matching between DWD and CHE has allowed the creation of several custom reports which have provided CHE with some early insight into the performance of its higher education students in the workforce. IDOE has also completed data matching with DWD, using adult secondary education data. Next, IDOE will share career and technical education information with DWD, allowing for matches with workforce data as well as higher education data already present in the system. The final goal is to identify the best practice for matching IDOE K-12 data with higher education and workforce data. IDOE and CHE will pilot a match of the 08-09 higher education data with K-12 data at the end of 2009. IDOE, DWD, and CHE are also examining additional best practices for matching on a variety of variables to link K-12 and workforce data.

Beyond simply having a strong statewide longitudinal data system, Indiana will demonstrate that the data it produces is accessible to and usable by teachers, school and district administrators, policymakers, students, parents and community members. All these stakeholders should be able to use data to inform their instruction, operations, management, resource allocation and decision- and policy-making.

To achieve these goals, Indiana will invest in a vertically operable data system, allowing IDOE to obtain rapid-time data, which would be available quickly enough to inform current lessons, instruction and related supports by communicating with local student management systems. Student achievement data, including data from ISTEP+ and various formative assessments such as DIBELS and Acuity, will be made available to educators, parents, decision-makers and other stakeholders through the state's Learning Connection portal. Indiana has identified the following objectives to achieve this goal:

Objective 1: The Learning Connection is expanded to include electronic student-level IEP data.

Objective 2: Working with stakeholders, additional data sets are identified to load into the Learning Connection from IDOE's data warehouse; data are loaded and desired reports to be created and displayed using the data are also identified and provided.

Objective 3: The functionality of the Learning Connection is expanded to allow districts to upload district-level assessment data.

Objective 4: Indiana's at-risk indicator tool is enhanced to utilize additional longitudinal data available in the Learning Connection and provide educators with a customized, secure and accurate student-level at-risk report.

Objective 5: Data analysis tools and additional custom reports are built into the Learning Connection to facilitate data analysis by educators.

Objective 6: Targeted professional development and evaluation is provided to selected schools (as well as statewide).

Objective 7: Post-secondary feedback data at the individual student and aggregated level are available in the Learning Connection, for educators (student-level) and the public (aggregated level).

Objective 8: IDOE's public website is revamped to include data definitions, more frequently updated data, additional report querying tools and aggregated postsecondary feedback reports.

In addition to making data easily accessible to educators and the public, Indiana will encourage educators to use this data to improve instruction and close the achievement gap. Indiana wants to increase the use of local instructional improvement systems that provide educators with the information and resources they need to inform and improve their instruction. If Indiana is awarded RttT funding, IDOE will not only continue toward the current goal of 100% adoption of diagnostic assessment tools statewide, but IDOE will also work with existing partners to develop the next generation of assessment technology. The evolved system will identify existing gaps in student knowledge to ensure appropriate instruction, ensure that a student does not fall further behind, and identify the most critical interventions. IDOE would also seek to expand adoption to the high school level. RttT funds will help Indiana accelerate the adoption of an evolved assessment system by allowing IDOE to work with schools that are using diagnostic assessments well and to full capacity now to develop the enhanced tools while the original system continues to be adopted by remaining schools statewide.

Once new functions are fully developed, each school can simply “press a button” to update its systems with the new offerings.

The state will also support participating LEAs that are using instructional improvement systems by providing effective professional development on how to use these systems. To do this, Indiana will provide expert technical assistance to help individual educators understand the data made available through the Learning Connection and to help strategize ways the data may inform instruction for a given educator/student. IDOE also plans to use the data warehouse to further provide student-level longitudinal data to teachers and administrators using the Learning Connection.

Moreover, IDOE plans to provide professional development and job-embedded training for educators on how to analyze data and use it for benchmarking and evaluation, as well as differentiating and improving instruction to benefit student learning. Professional development will be provided in two ways. First, statewide—Web-Ex trainings, videos, and conferences will be offered on how to use Learning Connection data and reporting tools for data-driven instruction. Second, targeted professional development will be offered to Indiana’s identified lowest-achieving schools with the goal of raising student achievement quickly and significantly.

IDOE also plans to continually obtain feedback from educators, policymakers and researchers to ensure reports made available through the data warehouse and Learning Connection are sufficient to meet stakeholder needs. In addition, IDOE will evaluate the effectiveness of its professional development to ensure it leads to measurable increases in data-driven instruction and data-driven policy-making, resulting in increased student achievement and school attainment while closing the achievement gap.

IDOE also envisions creating a certification training process, much like Oregon’s DATA project. This certification program, according to Oregon DATA Project’s website, “was created for educators interested in teaching others how to use data to improve student achievement.” IDOE would like to pursue a similar train-the-trainer model to scale effective professional development statewide.

To make more and better data available to educators in a mechanism that promotes data-powered instruction, diploma auditing and feedback to counselors and teachers, IDOE needs to expand its Learning Connection project to enter Phase Two. This phase will provide additional custom reporting and high school feedback reports and will promote professional development partnerships between researchers and educators. Moreover, IDOE will revamp its public website to make aggregated data more user-friendly and more up to date by utilizing data obtained through real-time data exchange and adding postsecondary feedback data.

The state will also make appropriate data from instructional improvement systems, together with statewide longitudinal data system data, available and accessible to researchers.

### **Great Teachers and Leaders:**

First and foremost, IDOE’s priority with regard to RttT is to recognize great teaching and leadership. The best thing we can do in our application is shine a spotlight on excellence by assisting schools and LEAs in their efforts to increase teacher and leader effectiveness, close the achievement gap and ensure the equitable distribution of effective teachers and leaders across the state. Nowhere is this task more urgent and important than in high-poverty and high-minority schools that have been historically marginalized. Addressing this inequity and eliminating the achievement gap are the civil rights issues of our time.

To meet this objective, IDOE will focus on teacher and principal quality through the accurate evaluation of individual performance. Recognizing that teacher and principal effectiveness are the most important factors in improving student achievement and closing the achievement gap, teachers and principals must be credibly evaluated on their ability to impact student outcomes and growth. As prescribed by the RttT requirements established by ED, participating LEAs must reexamine their evaluation tools and begin to use them to inform policies regarding hiring, laying off, professional development, compensation, promotion and retention.

Evidence of student learning must be a significant criterion for teacher or leader effectiveness. This criterion is clearly outlined by ED and must be a key to consideration for teacher and principal evaluation. IDOE will work with teachers and principals to develop a common framework. This framework will incorporate student growth, as defined by the RttT application, to count for at least 51% of the total evaluation. Student growth will be the foundation upon which a clear set of guidelines is identified by IDOE for evaluating teacher and principal performance.

There are several key goals behind the development of a common evaluation framework for both teachers and leaders:

- Establishment of a program to evaluate and reward effective teachers and school leaders through a comprehensive data-driven performance management system;
- Enhancement of strategies which recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most;
- Development of a statewide talent pipeline to increase the number of and broaden the distribution of highly effective teachers and leaders, particularly in high-poverty and high-minority schools;
- Creation of clear, rigorous standards and high expectations for teacher and leader performance; and
- Alignment between teacher evaluation and principal evaluation, with an intense focus on data.

The teacher evaluation framework will include close examination of key performance metrics (e.g. purposeful planning, classroom culture, effective instructional techniques, and professional leadership). Coupled with student growth and learning, these metrics will provide for data that meaningfully differentiates teacher effectiveness across a four category ratings spectrum (highly effective, effective, needs improvement, ineffective). Having four clearly defined categories is essential in ensuring that (1) great teachers are recognized and rewarded for their efforts, (2) great teaching practice is shared across the state and (3) decision-making regarding teachers is carried out in a fair and transparent way.

Similarly, principals will be evaluated in accordance with an evidence-based, multi-pronged definition of effectiveness. Based on the work of New Leaders for New Schools, Indiana's principal evaluation framework will closely examine (1) student outcomes, (2) teacher effectiveness and (3) leadership actions. Within these three domains, the principal evaluation will determine whether and how the school leader is able to help teachers improve and ensure effective teaching in every classroom (e.g. hiring, professional development, accountability, etc.). This will require a streamlined analysis of leadership practices that have high causality with regard to breakthrough achievement gains. Both the teacher and principal evaluation framework will include a collaborative goal-setting component for teachers and principals to set growth goals specific to student achievement and teacher or principal effectiveness.



As part of the evaluation process, teachers and principals will be provided a dashboard that clearly illustrates student growth data in which individual student growth can be analyzed against classroom growth, classroom growth against school-wide growth, school-wide growth against district growth, and district growth against state growth. This data dashboard will also be used to shape targeted growth plans for teachers and principals, outlining key strengths, areas for improvement, and next steps for professional development.

Indiana is uniquely positioned to use student growth as a predominant criterion for teacher and principal evaluation because we are one of only a few states that currently have a clear approach to measuring student growth at the individual student level. Indiana began exploring student growth models in spring 2008 and is in the midst of a three-phase rollout process to be completed next fall.

Developed in partnership with the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment (NCIEA) and the Colorado Department of Education, Indiana's growth model will provide a common understanding of how individual students and groups of students progress from year to year toward state standards based on where each individual student begins. Moreover, the model will focus attention on which teachers and principals are getting the strongest growth. Notably, a teacher's evaluation would be predominantly based on the performance of all his/her students over time.

This evaluation framework will lead to the development of systems to distinguish highly effective teaching and leadership from effective, effective from fair, and fair from poor. To ensure these systems are used to inform decision-making in a meaningful way, teachers and principals will be involved in their development. This includes piloting these systems, especially in persistently low-achieving schools identified for state sanctions. The urgency with regard to ensuring that struggling schools have highly effective teachers and leaders cannot be overstated. This need was clearly evidenced by the recent audit of 23 schools currently in the fourth consecutive year of state sanctions under Public Law 221.

Along with the adoption of a common teacher and principal evaluation framework, classroom observations will be carried out multiple times throughout each school year, and full evaluations will be completed at least annually. Increasing the frequency of constructive feedback and support will lead to better information about instructional quality and the caliber of school leadership. IDOE will also use all available resources to ensure teachers and principals are held accountable for their effectiveness and performance.

As Indiana moves to a common evaluation framework for teachers and leaders, the state will need to redefine professional development as that which improves student growth and helps teachers score higher on the four category ratings spectrum. To this end, significant aspects of professional development will be put out to bid to ensure the highest quality and to hold prospective vendors accountable for the professional growth of all participants. IDOE will convene a committee to conduct this process and promote cutting-edge systems for compensating, promoting and retaining great teachers and leaders.

In addition to using student growth to evaluate teachers and principals, IDOE is a strong proponent of using student growth and performance to evaluate the institutions that train teachers and principals. In collaboration with state institutions of higher education, the state's evaluation framework will be taught in teacher and principal preparation programs. These programs will be held accountable for producing effective teachers and leaders. Modeled after Louisiana's initiative, Indiana plans to tie student growth data into a chain of evaluation that reaches all the way to teacher colleges. Those with a pattern of weak performance would face shake-ups or, in extreme cases, more severe sanctions.

Indiana also seeks to immediately increase the number of candidates participating in programs that have a track record of providing effective teachers: Teach For America, The New Teacher Project's Indianapolis

Teaching Fellows and the Woodrow Wilson Indiana Teaching Fellows. Investing in alternative routes such as these ensures a pipeline of exceptional human capital and helps to address key areas of shortage across the state. Moreover, IDOE will lend strong support to induction programs that train, support and retain new teachers, measurably improve teacher effectiveness, and result in significant student achievement gains.

The evaluation framework will result in systems that provide clear feedback on performance to teachers and principals. Administrators and teacher leaders will be certified as evaluation experts after completing a rigorous training program and measurably demonstrating proficiency. The state will maintain a database of these experts and will track their record and results. IDOE will also call upon a “cabinet” of top teachers and leaders to help shape the future of teacher and leader evaluation. Specifically, this would include continuous refinement of the evaluation framework with the goal of having an exemplar for the state and the rest of the nation.

Setting a measurable hurdle for teacher and principal effectiveness also provides the opportunity to identify and certify turnaround specialists. Nearly 100 Indiana schools, representing 50,000 students, will be in Restructuring by 2010. Turning around these largely high-poverty schools will directly and dramatically reduce the achievement gap. To meet this challenge, we will need great teachers and leaders willing to work in failing schools and drastically improve instructional quality. These teachers and leaders must be agents of change: well prepared and committed to an unyielding belief and sense of urgency to ensure that children in even the most depressed communities can achieve at the highest levels. IDOE will offer financial incentives for top-performing teachers and leaders to work in our state’s persistently lowest-achieving schools and ensure poor and minority students have equitable access to effective teachers and leaders.

A credible evaluation framework paves the path for strengthening the teaching profession, because it offers greater opportunity and flexibility for IDOE to support teacher and principal improvement. Teachers and principals are accountable to students and parents for employing high expectations and world-class standards to drive student achievement each day. These professionals should be evaluated annually and rewarded for their performance based on objective data on student learning. Through RttT, Indiana will become the best state in the union in establishing a positive culture where professional support, cultivation and training are second to none.

### **Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools:**

As a cornerstone of the state’s reform efforts, Indiana plans to meet the challenge of diagnosing failing schools by developing a transparent system to identify and differentiate among the state’s persistent low-achievers. This means looking at two key indicators of school performance: student achievement and student growth. Notably, Indiana is one of only a handful of states prepared to implement a value-added assessment as part of a comprehensive strategy for responding to the needs of the state’s lowest-achieving schools.

There is a profound urgency to attack this particular reform area. Intervening in the lowest-achieving schools may be the most important task IDOE will assume over the next several years. The numbers here are stark. Nearly 100 Indiana schools, representing 50,000 students, will be in Restructuring by 2010. IDOE will install and enforce strong and clear processes for sanctioned interventions, including the identification of the appropriate turnaround model for each situation.

Although Indiana has made bold strides in finding ways to improve our state’s lowest-achieving schools, significantly more remains to be done. IDOE is committed to helping those LEAs and schools desiring to create

fundamental change in and depart from business as usual with its struggling schools. Current efforts include the following:

- Technical assistance for struggling schools to undertake comprehensive improvement planning;
- Extensive state planning around a comprehensive turnaround approach, providing charter-like freedom to all participating schools;
- Acceleration of the state's school accountability timeline, with the goal of allowing the state to provide resources earlier to help the lowest-achieving schools; and
- Issuance of a Request for Information for a "Turnaround Leaders Academy," aiming to work with strong external partners to develop a pipeline for "transformational leadership."

IDOE has the statutory right to intervene in chronically failing schools. This is largely uncharted territory for Indiana and will require new infrastructure, systems, funding and external partners to intervene effectively. Twenty-three schools will be eligible for takeover in 2011 under state statute, and many more schools may fall into this category in future years. IDOE is preparing a strategy for these schools if and when it becomes necessary for these schools to come under state receivership.

Before it becomes necessary to take such a drastic step, however, IDOE will assist LEAs in providing course correction and guidance. In 2009, the state funded Technical Assistance Teams (TAT) to visit the 23 schools identified for state sanctions and provide targeted feedback embedded within a comprehensive improvement planning process. Following these visits, each school will have the opportunity to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the state that will outline the actions needed for the school to remain in good standing with IDOE. The MOU process ensures that key decision makers are involved and that schools understand (1) the steps that must be taken to avoid takeover and (2) the urgency of engendering rapid improvement. If these actions and the ensuing results are successful, the school will continue to operate with its current governance structure. But if these actions are not taken and the results continue to be poor, the state will pursue the most aggressive action possible to ensure that every student has access to a high quality education.

Indiana will align its turnaround strategy with those of ED, consistent with the requirements of both RttT and 1003(g) School Improvement Grants (SIG). The four intervention models are summarized below:

- Turnaround model: Replace the principal, rehire no more than 50% of the staff, and grant the principal sufficient operational flexibility (including flexibility in staffing, calendars/time, and budgeting) to implement fully a comprehensive approach to substantially improve student outcomes.
- Restart model: Convert a school or close and reopen it under a charter school operator, a charter management organization, or an education management organization that has been selected through a rigorous review process.
- School closure: Close a school and enroll the students who attended that school in other, higher-achieving, schools in the LEA.
- Transformation model: Implement each of the following strategies: (1) replace the principal and take steps to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness; (2) institute comprehensive instructional

reforms; (3) increase learning time and create community-oriented schools; and (4) provide operational flexibility and sustained support.

All Title I, SIG, and RttT funding will be aligned with ED turnaround models. Moreover, we are excited that new and innovative solutions like New Tech High School could be incorporated within these four models to support the development of rigorous and collaborative learning environments. IDOE will work with LEAs to implement the model that best applies to the specific needs of each school. We will intensely focus on the use of data, especially data collected by the TAT teams during the quality school reviews, in turning around these schools and closing the achievement gap. As part of the MOU process, IDOE will also work with schools to outline key metrics for judging and evaluating performance. Ongoing monitoring and assistance in local school improvement efforts will be provided to ensure that schools are on a clear path to success and are able to sustain their progress.

A goal with school turnaround is to provide schools the autonomy to control the necessary levers for transformative change – the greatest of which are teachers and leaders. IDOE is committed to developing robust human capital pipelines that identify and attract new and existing teachers and leaders to turnaround schools. Indiana is currently in the process of establishing multiple pathways for prospective turnaround leaders:

- Indiana University Executive MBA for Turnaround Leadership: A unique partnership between the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University Graduate School of Education, Teach For America, and IDOE to establish a pathway to school leadership.
- Indianapolis Principals Fellowship: A collaboration of Columbia Teachers College, Teach For America, and Indianapolis Public Schools to provide a fast-track path to school leadership within IPS.
- Notre Dame Educational Leadership Program: Supported by The Kern Family Foundation, an innovative approach to transformative education leadership that seeks to attract entrepreneurial individuals to redefine what is possible in a public school setting.
- Turnaround Leaders Academy: U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan stated, “Over the coming years, America needs to find 5,000 high-energy, hero principals to take over struggling schools.” In response to his challenge, the Turnaround Leaders Academy will identify, recruit, train and develop transformational leaders who will focus on the challenge of turning around our state’s chronically low-achieving schools.

A strong system of high quality charter schools is another tool for Indiana as we look to turn around the lowest 5% of schools. Indiana does not have a charter school cap, and its current charter community is largely located near Indiana’s lowest-achieving schools. Ball State University, the City of Indianapolis and any local school corporation can authorize charters. Although charter schools are an important component of school turnaround, Indiana must ensure that only quality providers are approved and that low-performing charters are either improved or closed. The state will focus on creating an environment that is supportive of charter development and increasing the number of charter authorizers while holding them to a high standard of quality and service.

IDOE recognizes there are schools in low-income areas across the state that are beating the odds when it comes to positively affecting the life outcomes of high-poverty and high-minority students. As part of the state’s turnaround strategy, we will shine a spotlight on high-performing high-poverty (HHP) schools. By linking struggling schools to exemplars, we can begin to stimulate significant improvement and build a network

of resources that does not require direct state involvement. The full implementation of Indiana's growth model will help to identify these HPHP schools. In this sense, the state's turnaround approach will be used as an R&D engine to develop and implement best-in-class policies, raising student achievement and eliminating the achievement gap so all Hoosiers graduate from high school ready for college and career success.

**Conclusion:**

Among other things, Fast Forward includes (a) the expansion of programs with a proven track record of bringing exceptional human capital into the ranks of the teaching and school leader professions; (b) support for a statewide system linking readily-accessible data, relating to both students and their teachers, across the continuum; (c) deployment of a new tool to measure student growth over time, which will provide teachers with an invaluable view of the students in their classrooms and state administrators with a more reliable measure by which to hold schools accountable; and (d) increased funding for educational entrepreneurship.

RttT funding will be provided to those states which most aggressively advance reforms. Indiana's Race to the Top application sets the stage for bold and innovative initiatives that will dramatically close the achievement gap and have a lasting impact well beyond the life of the one-time RttT funds. Working collaboratively with schools and LEAs, IDOE will move swiftly and deliberately in pursuit of our vision for academic achievement and global competitiveness, encouraging fresh new ideas and out-of-the-box thinking. Innovation and urgency will provide the fuel for Indiana's reform efforts and closing the achievement gap.